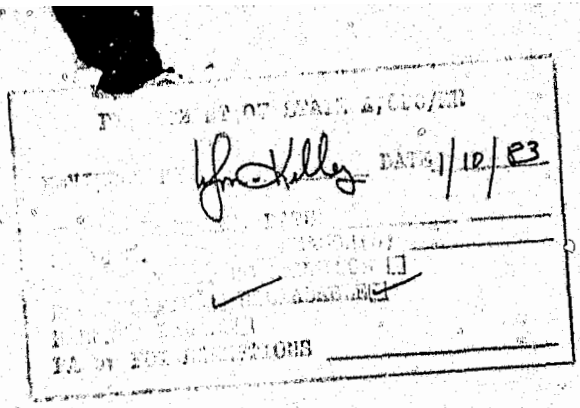

547

CONFIDENTIAL

LIBERTY CLAIM

Background

Israel has paid the USG $6.8 million in claims relating to the 34 men killed and 164 injured (as well as minor personal property losses and medical expenses) when the IDF attacked the U.S.S. LIBERTY on the high seas north of Sinai on June 8, 1967 at the height of the Six-Day War. As Israel requested, we delayed until the other claims were settled discussing our claim for $7.6 million, presented to the GOI in July 1968, relating to damage done to the ship. The ship, along with others in its class, has in the meantime been decommissioned and is being scrapped; we have informed the GOI of this.

Since September 1969 when we raised the remaining claim with the Foreign Ministry (Michael Elizur) the GOI has been evasive and slow in responding to our approaches, indicating that it would reply in due course. The latest conversation on this claim occurred just prior to Eban's arrival in Washington last May when Elizur told Ambassador Barbour that the GOI response was being cleared.

You may wish to say:

-- We appreciate Israel's prompt and full settlement of the earlier claims.

-- We believe it is important that our two governments maintain a dialogue on the outstanding claim. In May Michael Elizur told Ambassador Barbour that a GOI response to the U.S. was being cleared. We wonder when we can expect to hear from the GOI.

NEA/IAI:MCLissfelt:hml
10/8/70 x22294

CLEARANCE: EK
L/C:ELKerley

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED